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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 001543

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DEPT FOR WHA/CEN CORNFORTH AND SCHIFFER, DRL FOR MAGGIO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2017
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER SIEGE, CLAMOURING FOR
ASSISTANCE

REF: A. MANAGUA 893
[1](#)B. MANAGUA 1350

Classified By: Charge Peter Brennan for reasons 1.4(B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Over the past 2-3 months, the political section has received over a dozen proposals from civil society organizations concentrated in three areas: human rights defense, organized labor, and indigenous (Miskito) groups. Each organization claims to oppose President Daniel Ortega and seeks financial support to develop, promote, or advance democracy or democratic forces in some way. Feeling isolated and threatened, these organizations are reaching out to the USG for both assurances and assistance.

Comment
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[1](#)2. (C) Because our ability to directly fund even the smallest projects is extremely limited, post has concentrated on trying to identify and facilitate local funding and/or to refer proposals to other organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy for funding consideration. (NOTE: Last week NED agreed to give the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission for Human Rights - featured below - \$45,000 as a first year grant, \$15,000 beyond the normal range of a first year grant. END NOTE.) Of the many proposals received thus far, we have forwarded only the two most promising and, we believe, important proposals to DRL and the desk requesting assistance (ref A, B).

[1](#)3. (C) We know that some organizations will shrewdly seek to avail themselves of the USG, playing pro-democracy and/or anti-Ortega cards, hoping to cash-in on what they perceive as the United States' new-found interest in -- and associated generosity towards -- Nicaragua. However, there is no doubt that many civil society organizations in these areas face real pressure and are genuinely afraid for democracy or at least respect for democratic principles.

[1](#)4. (C) We stress that the proposals we forward to Washington represent only the tip of a growing iceberg. Under the current administration, civil society organizations will continue to reach out for help. It is less certain if they will continue to reach out to the USG, or even survive in some cases, if we fail to provide some assistance. If this happens, we could lose important access points into and influence with civil society at a critical juncture. Local democracy funds or some other post-managed funding mechanism that would give us access to fast and flexible funds would enable us, in a small way, to strategically buttress civil society.

Partial List of Funding Requests

15. (C) Below is a list of ten projects received by poloffs related to developing or reinforcing democracy/democratic movements in the face of growing pressure and, in some cases, threats from the Ortega government. While not a complete list of the proposals received, it does represent the best well-developed proposal ideas.

- Nicaraguan Permanent Commission for Human Rights: proposal to continue defending the Miskito genocide case on the Atlantic Coast, open departmental offices, and continue developing database and internal capacities - \$500,000 over 2 years.

- Fundacion Asociacion para la Promocion Comunitaria: Proposal to train and provide financing for micro and small enterprise development for 200 women in Managua - \$365,000 over 18 months.

- FURCA: Indigenous defense NGO on the Atlantic Coast Proposal by indigenous (Miskito) NGO in Nicaragua, s North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) to bring civic education, democracy and leadership training to 60 communities - \$250,000.

- Permanent Workers Congress (CPT): Proposal for labor rights workshops for CPT, s 4,800 members on national and international labor laws and standards and roles of labor unions in democratic societies - \$182,900 over 2 years.

- Aikuki Wal: Proposal from indigenous (Miskito) NGO to provide leadership and cooperative business management

training to approximately 60 communities in the RAAN - \$49,000.

- Association of Indigenous Miskito groups: Proposal to finance the convocation of a General Assembly (as granted in Law 28 - Law of Autonomy) to discuss current political, economic, social, and cultural issues affecting the Atlantic Coast, s indigenous populations and to re-elect new leadership of the YATAMA movement - \$18,000.

- Nicaraguan Resistance Party: Proposal to fund radio-based civic education programs in the northern departments of Jinotega and Matagalpa - \$12,000.

- United Teachers Union (USM): Proposal to finance a general assembly of 800 members of affiliated syndicates (covered by media) to witness the announcement and signing of an agreement to formally form USM labor confederation - \$9,000.

- Centro de Derechos Humanos, Ciudadanos, y Autonomicos (CEDEHCA): Proposal to help out youth in the RAAN - job skills, education, etc - \$8,000.

- Consejo de Ancianos: Proposal to finance field research to record the cases of survivors of the "Red Christmas" exercise carried out against the Miskitos in order to write a book - \$2,000.

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